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## THE BRITISH MONARCHY: A REPLY.

BY DEFENSOR.

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THE advantages of satire are the nervous stimulus which it gives to the person attacked, and the pleasure which it affords to the neighbors of that person. No doubt, the sweeping denunciation of English institutions which appeared under the title of "An Indictment of the British Monarchy" gave an agreeable titillation to several readers in England, and was exquisitely appreciated in many a sturdy homestead in America. But satire, stimulating as it may be, has plain disadvantages; and one of these is its tendency to be "off the spot" when it descends to details. It is most effective when it is vaguest, when the horrid shades are laid in without drawing, with a bold, free brush. "Anglo-American" sets forth to make our flesh creep, but he draws a portrait of us which no one within sight of us can recognize.

No doubt, we have our faults and our misfortunes; but some one who knows more about us and the condition of the world than "Anglo-American" should tell us of them. "Russia," we read, "faces the future with a fervid, patient, almost mystical faith"; "Anglo-American" can know little of the internal condition of Russia. "To America," at the present moment, "the whole prospect, as usual, is rainbow-hued." Our censor goes over the countries of the world, and paints them all in optimistic radiance. England, alone, is not spared the privilege of his mild reproof. A sort of millennium has set in all over the earth, except in the British Empire, where nothing reigns but "a spirit of depression and foreboding," and where we are delivered up at all points to "an almost hysterical pessimism." Somebody seems, indeed, to be not a little pessimistic and thoroughly hysterical, but who is it? Our critic is really too angry to be consistent; for, after

asserting our inferiority to all the European governments, he permits himself to say that we are seeing our "Parliament slipping down almost to the Continental level of incapacity." It is difficult to comprehend how one slips down to a condition which is already high above one's reach.

It would be unfair, however, to examine too minutely a sensational diatribe which is, doubtless, only intended to awaken a little amazement and make foreign groundlings gape. But a few of the fallacies in "Anglo-American's" article are worth exposure.

The British Empire has accepted the principle of monarchy. Our critic is obliged to admit that it has accepted it with extraordinary unanimity. He says that "republicanism in England is to-day simply non-existent. He has observed that all classes, however widely divided, that all provinces, however remote from one another, are united in estimating the Monarchy more highly than at any previous moment in our history. "The Crown, to-day, finds an unchallenged acceptance," he adds. Does it not strike him as a little futile to denounce to us the horrors of a system which so many millions of diverse human beings agree to think beneficent? After all, it is the mass of British millions, and not an individual, who are called on to decide the matter. How sad if it should turn out that it is precisely the fortunate strength of our vast unanimity that upsets the temper of our critic!

The writer of the article lays very great stress on the powerlessness of the Monarch to interfere in public affairs. He exaggerates this excessively, and he betrays a curious want of historical knowledge on the subject. Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, it is true, the British Monarch displayed a fine sense of tact, an almost faultless decorum in her attitude to affairs. But when "Anglo-American" tells us that an English king is such an automaton that he is incapable of disturbing the political situation, we are at a loss to follow his meaning. It is only necessary to point to George IV.'s successful intriguing about the Catholic question in 1827, and to the results of an *extempore* speech of William IV. in 1834, to show how great the power for mischief is which the Crown possesses under our Constitution, a power which nothing but the wisdom and statesmanship of the Monarch keeps in abeyance.

Instances of the reverse condition—namely, that in which the personal influence of the sovereign is exercised in moments of

political strain, with the direct result of relieving the strain—have been far more common. It is strange that any one should be unaware of the numerous occasions on which the experience and practical wisdom of Queen Victoria were exercised in this way. By the working of the British Constitution, in the course of an extended reign, the Monarch is presently left with an experience of affairs and a knowledge of men which are unrivalled. The Monarch, alone in the state, has the advantage of being in constant touch, both officially and socially, with political leaders on both sides. The late Queen was amply provided with friends in either political party; and, as time went on, and as all the groups were transformed by the natural evolution of things, she grew to be a portent of precedent, to whose memory and discipline of mind every one who could appeal was fortunate. She had gained this ascendancy by the happy accident of her immovable position, and by the astuteness with which she had so long held herself, above both parties, yet in sympathy with both.

When, therefore, we are told that the influence of the Monarchy is purely a negative one, and that the sovereign should never, and can never, appear outside “a zone of calm,” we, who remember the events of the last reign, can but smile at this image of a monarch, motionless like a painted statue, led through our political life in the hieratic attitude of a god in a chariot.

Those of us who have approached, in any degree, the inner machinery of Empire, know what an activity the position demands, how strenuously, to use a familiar expression, the nose of the exalted personage has to be held to the grindstone. It was not until advanced years that Queen Victoria ceased to take a practical part in all branches of public work. Those Civil Servants who have reached middle life have a memory of her brief and thoughtful minutes on the documents which passed through her hands. These minutes she had ceased to write on general papers by 1880, but she continued to the last to give a punctual and effective attention to public business. Indeed, it is said that it was not until the Thursday before she died that she permitted herself to relax. On that night, for the first time, the despatch-boxes were not outside her door, and those about her recognized the fatality of the sign.

If illustrations are called for of the value of the personal authority of the sovereign, they are not difficult to give. It must be

remembered that the secret political history of Queen Victoria's reign is not yet written, and that, until its particulars are made public, the main instances of her interference in state business must continue unknown. But already much has transpired. When, in the early part of 1864, war broke out between Germany and Denmark, England was within an ace of taking up the cause of the latter. Public sentiment was generously moved; the Danish royal family were popular in the country and at Court; Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell were unquestionably in favor of a declaration of war with Germany. It is difficult to imagine what the present state of Europe would be if these counsels had prevailed. It was mainly the Queen who, with the help of Lord Granville, put the entire weight of her prestige into the other scale, and insisted that the principle of neutrality should be maintained. Nor will Americans easily forget that it was her modification, made with her own pen, in the English Government's despatch on the Mason and Slidell business, which removed all danger of war between us and the Northern States.

It would be of little use to multiply examples of the direct and powerful exercise of influence of which the Monarchy is still capable in internal affairs. But Mr. Bryce has recently, in his "Biographical Studies," drawn attention to a case, not generally known, which has particular interest. When the Irish Church Disestablishment Bill of 1869 was being hung up by the inveterate prejudice of a section of the Opposition, it was the Queen herself who suggested to Archbishop Tait a plan of compromise between Mr. Gladstone's government and those Tory peers who were pertinaciously opposing the Bill. The Primate accepted her commission, and he conducted his compromise on the lines she suggested with such success that the Bill passed the House of Lords, while good terms were secured, nevertheless, for the Irish Bishops. In this case, it is to be remembered that the personal sentiment of the Queen was opposed to Irish disestablishment, and that her action in obtaining the adoption of the Bill in June, 1869, was, therefore, the more purely public-spirited. The occasions on which she used her influence to prevent outbreaks of war on the Continent were frequent. It was her personal and private action which averted hostilities between France and Germany in 1875, and delayed them between Russia and Turkey in 1876. It would be interesting to know what individual in the best-regu-

lated republic in the universe has been able to make his hand felt, in this way, in calming and repressing the armies of the world.

On the advantages which are gained by royal visits abroad, in the consolidation of friendly international relations, our critic is strangely silent. He speaks with great freedom of the home occupations with which the King is credited by the newspapers, but he is absolutely dumb as to the King's journeys abroad. He tells us that "the Monarchy works to the detriment of England," and insists that the King "has been carefully unfitted" for duties of a positive kind. It is difficult to understand either the position of the critic, or the precise grounds of his indignation. He appears to float between two opinions. He tells us that the King can do nothing, and this shocks his soul. But yet he tells us that the King does a great deal, and this shocks him even more. It would be interesting to know whether "Anglo-American" considers the diplomatic visits of the King to Lisbon, Rome and Paris as examples of the former or of the latter class? He declares, roundly, that the King "is the master of no trade." Yet we have seen him, within the last few months, perform miracles in the extremely delicate and elaborate trade of diplomacy.

We suppose that it will hardly be denied that the relations of this country with its most intelligent and sensitive neighbor are of importance to our welfare. The attitude of France to England is of the highest importance, not only to our trade and financial welfare, but to those intellectual and sentimental parts of our being which it is a fatal piece of Podsnapery to neglect. We do not live on bread alone; we need also the light of the sun and the liberty of the air. It is the just boast of the French that their civilization radiates the one and is broadly exposed to the other. The Anglo-Saxon peoples have obtained the privilege of political liberty; they have still much to gain in the matter of spiritual liberty. The light that dissolves intellectual prejudice and disseminates the mental radiance in which thought can spread and blossom in tranquillity, is not so widely directed over England and America but that in France it beams with a more ample lustre. It would be a calamity for all that is brightest and most generous in English thought if a barrier should divide us from the mellow sympathy of France.

Such a barrier was raised, during the last years of the nineteenth century, by a succession of events which it is not necessary

here to recapitulate. It is the fact, at any rate, that a growing lack of sympathy, not yet amounting to enmity, but tending steadily and fatally in that direction, had risen, like a threatening shadow, between the two nations. It was of the nature of most vague animosities, whether public or private; it was based on a misunderstanding, on a growing inability in each to determine the real sentiments of the other. Only one person was capable of removing this barrier, by showing its perfectly phantasmal and cloudy character. That one person was the King, who, with great magnanimity and at very considerable personal risk (for no one knew the attitude of the French public beforehand), determined upon a stroke of high personal diplomacy. He stood on no ceremony; he took the courteous initiative; and he paid the French Republic the charming compliment of expressing his readiness to accept its hospitality.

The result was, perhaps, the most important to England which the new century has seen. The instinct of the King proved to have been exquisitely right. France was touched in its most delicate fibre, and the menacing cloud which had so long been gathering between the two nations melted as if by magic. England and France, to the general benefit of civilization, have entered into a new phase of mutual amity, which cannot but be immensely to the benefit of both. It is remarkable, we must repeat, that in his diatribe against the King's person,—for he does not confine himself to the vague principle of Monarchy,—“Anglo-American” should have omitted the slightest allusion to this eminently successful piece of diplomacy.

Critics of the class of “Anglo-American” write as if intelligent Englishmen still clung to the seventeenth-century theory of the divine right of kings. They talk as if we were still under the domination of such flatulent and obscurantist doctrines as inspired the once famous “Patriarcha” of Sir Robert Filmer. The pretensions which were put forward by the inordinate vanity of the Stuarts far more closely resemble those advanced by the Kaiser,—in whom our critic sees nothing less than a hero riding “on the crest of the rising wave,”—than those of any rational partisan of the Monarchy in England during the last two hundred years. It is absurd to pretend that anything in the existing authority of the sovereign tends, even remotely, to a paralysis of government. That assumption of lucrative feudal privileges,

which the Stuarts so obstinately put forward, led, as it could but inevitably lead, to their destruction. In the course of two centuries, the King, from being a great extortionate landlord, was transformed by slow gradations into the principal paid servant of the state. At the present moment, for all practical purposes, the British sovereign is the head of the national Public Service; he is at the summit of the great hierarchy of those who are employed in the work of the state. He is no longer the tyrant; he is simply the honorary manager of our enormous national concern.

It is plainly a matter for those who are practically engaged in the business, those—in other words—who pay, to decide whether the salary of the King (to put it roughly) is earned or no. If those who employ him in his great and responsible office are satisfied, such censure as that of “Anglo-American” is not worth the paper upon which it is inscribed. If “Anglo-American” could point to any great section of English citizens who are dissatisfied with the conduct of the Monarchy; if he could give voice to a considerable minority of malcontents; if he could diagnose, in persuasive language, grave disadvantages in our system, and could hope to wake an echo of his dissatisfaction in a large number of English bosoms, there might be some value in his criticisms. But he writes of what commends itself to an enormous majority of those most intimately and personally interested.

The writer bases his “indictment” on the general “depression and foreboding” which he discovers in all classes of English society. Every section of our national life, if we are to believe this observer, is complaining and discouraged. He “hardly knows which to pity more,” Royalty, which is the cause of this condition of distress, or the Empire, which is so obstinately blind to the fact that it is to the institution of the Monarchy that she owes her bankrupt condition. The only reply to balderdash so preposterous seems to be a direct negative. There is no reason to suppose that the worst discomforts of the Empire at this moment are in any sense excessive or abnormal. There is no sign anywhere of such “depression and foreboding” as “Anglo-American” evolves out of his inner consciousness. And where our symptoms as a nation may be not wholly favorable, where we are ready to deplore this or that distressing or even dangerous tendency, there is not the smallest evidence that the Monarchy is in any way responsible for or encourages it.



The idea that England is rapidly declining in prosperity is one which is not borne out by statistics or by social phenomena, by facts or by figures. What is the case is this. We had gone through a long and expensive war, the temporary drain of which is just being felt. No experience is more common than that a man is conscious of the strain of an irregular expense, not during the proceedings which have led to it, but afterwards, when the bill comes in. We are paying our South-African bill, and here and there we grumble. Moreover, there is at this moment a general weakness in finance, which discourages speculation and casts a gloom across the Stock Exchange. But will any one pretend that there is the slightest evidence that this is not temporary, or that it does not affect a far wider zone of markets than are commanded from London? Has this been a very prosperous financial autumn in the Wall Street of "rainbow-hued" America? Is everything rose-colored on the Bourse of St. Petersburg? In our case, no doubt, the raising of the great fiscal question, which is exciting universal discussion, cannot fail to have an agitating effect upon business. Whether the change Mr. Chamberlain proposes is wise or unwise, the mere consideration of it has the momentary effect of disturbing all our commercial arrangements. But from this it is a far cry to a black foreboding of bankruptcy.

Few things are more futile than to prognosticate the ultimate ruin of a country on the basis of a few provisional symptoms of insecurity. A nation is not lost because even serious misfortunes befall it. The very worst that the British Empire has lately undergone, magnified by hostile exaggeration to the extreme of importance, is but a pin-prick by the side of the fate which seemed to have overwhelmed France in 1871. Then it was excusable for pessimists to declare that Germany had broken her antagonist's back, that France had sunken never to rise again. Who, at that date, could have dared to prophesy the prosperity of France in 1903? Predictions founded on sentimental impressions of a few months of crisis are inevitably false. History moves in curves too vast, the elements of national life are too numerous and complicated, to be measured in this rapid way. Has "Anglo-American" ever heard how, as Cowper says:

"The inestimable Estimate of Brown  
Rose like a paper kite, and charmed the town;  
But measures planned and executed well

Shifted the wind that raised it, and it fell.  
He trod the very selfsame ground you tread,  
And Victory refuted all he said.  
And yet his judgment was not framed amiss;  
His error, if he erred, was merely this:—  
He thought the dying hour already come,  
And a complete recovery struck him dumb?"

John Brown was a clergyman, who, in the dark year 1757, wrote a most ingenious book, called "An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times"; in which he proved England to be on the brink of ruin, and her hopeless condition to be due to the spread of tyranny, irreligion and licentiousness. Everybody was excessively alarmed; seven editions of the "Estimate" were sold to the terrified public in one year; and it was generally admitted that England was going to the dogs, when, most unfortunately for Brown's reputation as a prophet, Plassey immediately followed, and England swam up into a new era of prosperity. If our state were as parlous in 1903 as it was in 1757,—and it is ridiculous to imagine that it is,—a turn of fortune might in six months strike dumb the prophets of our national ruin. And if the Monarchy is to be quoted as the source of our decline, it will be only fair to attribute to it our revival also.

Our censor is deeply grieved at what he considers to be the apathy of the King with regard to questions of education. He accuses the Monarchy of being "responsible for perhaps half of the commercial inefficiency and unprogressiveness of England." The method of this kind of criticism seems to be, to dwell on whatever the critic does not approve of in the English social system, greatly to exaggerate its blackness, and to end up by saying that the King is responsible for "perhaps half" of it. It would be waste of time to combat opinions so jejune. But if "Anglo-American" will take the trouble to inquire, he will discover that, unfortunately, in this country education is so mixed up with religious squabbles that, in its present phase, it has become a sort of party matter, in which it would be unconstitutional for the Crown to interfere. We are ready to admit that education is one of our painful difficulties at this moment, and a question in which we are not likely to come to a definite and wholesome issue without some disagreeable struggles. But, so far from blaming the King for the illogical position into which circumstances have, for

the moment, forced us, we are thankful that he has not in any degree accentuated the differences between our educational groups. On the other hand, is it already forgotten how much his father did for the cause of technical and scientific education after 1848, or how much sensation was caused by his son's "Wake up!" speech, a direct plea for efficiency in all branches of teaching, delivered immediately after his return from his Colonial tour? In the face of these facts and of so much more that could be brought forward, the statement of "Anglo-American" that "the Monarchy militates against national efficiency" in educational matters is one which may be dismissed as groundless.

One charge which the indictment brings against us, however, is unfortunately not to be passed over so lightly as the rest. This is the degree in which the national time is wasted upon exercises which are of the nature of mere pleasure. Oddly enough, this is precisely the section across which "Anglo-American" hurries most rapidly. He mentions our inordinate fondness for every species of game and sport, and, of course, he asserts that the King is responsible for it; but he does not, as he justly might, show how heavily the excess of attention given to cricket and football reduces the opportunity of acquiring efficiency. His reason for the omission was, perhaps, that "rainbow-hued" America is not less devoted than England is to those physical exercises which, in moderation, are such an excellent medicine, and in excess such a sterilizing and wasting drug. He could not blame us without blaming those whom he wished most to flatter. We are, therefore, spared attack at the one point where, perhaps, we are at this moment more open to attack than any other. Instead of recognizing that relaxation is the reverse of work, that it is a wise mode of recruiting the forces for the business of life, our modern tendency is to make it the foremost thing, the business itself. And there can be no efficiency when we see, in Sterne's phrase, "all the world running at the ring of pleasure."

The British Empire has deliberately and unanimously determined on the retention of the monarchical system, and the ingenuity of adverse critics had better be diverted into more useful channels than that of trying to persuade us that we are on the brink of ruin, and that the Monarchy has brought us there.

DEFENSOR.